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SUBJECT: CANADA WILL SUPPORT FOR THE OAS MISSION IN COLOMBIA

REF: SECSTATE 207709

¶1. (SBU) Poloff delivered reftel points to Harold Hickman, Deputy Director in the Inter-American Relations Division of Foreign Affairs Canada. Hickman said that Canada is definitely going to provide assistance to the OAS Mission to Colombia, and it could be substantial. The GOC sent an inter-agency team to Colombia including a senior CIDA official, Colombia Desk Officer from FAC, and a member of the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START). The team came back impressed by the need for cash for the OAS mission (he said they had around \$27 in their bank account), and with a number of solid proposals from the Canadian Embassy in Bogota for viable projects.

¶2. (SBU) The money will be coming from the allocation for START, which Hickman said is a new concept whereby Foreign Affairs has its own budget for such programs and does not have to rely on CIDA. The proposals are awaiting an inter-agency decision-making process that will play out over the coming weeks. Hickman said there is some urgency, as the money, which is substantial, must be spent before the end of the Canadian fiscal year on March 31. He said he was sure it would be in the hundreds of thousands, and if they get what they are looking for, could top a million, making Canada the largest contributor to the OAS mission.

¶3. (SBU) Hickman reiterated that some funding was a fairly sure thing, as the Foreign Minister made a firm commitment to the OAS SecGen when he was in Canada in September to assist the mission. He also mentioned that Colombia's Foreign Minister, Carolina Barco is planning to visit Ottawa December 1st, although the visit may not come off if the country is in the middle of a federal campaign.

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